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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASMARA 000368

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SU](#) [ER](#)

SUBJECT: KHARTOUM BLASTS ERITREA ON DARFUR AND SOMALIA

REF: A. ASMARA 319

[1](#)B. ASMARA 205

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald K. McMullen for reason 1.4(d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Government of Sudan (GOS) Presidential Advisor Ghazi Salahuddein met with President Isaias Afwerki October 15 to chastise the Eritrean government's (GSE) support for Darfur rebel groups. He warned Isaias that the backdoor shipments of oil and foodstuffs would cease if the GSE continued to provide military training to JEM and SLA factions. Much to the GSE's chagrin, Salahuddein said the GSE's assistance in the north/south peace process would not be needed. Salahuddein also accused the GSE of using Ethiopia as an excuse for meddling in Somalia. He warned Isaias to get on board and support the Sheikh Sharif government. Supposedly the meeting left an impact on the GSE, which is now working to revise its policy on supporting Darfur rebel groups, according to the Sudanese embassy. End Summary.

"STOP TRAINING OUR ENEMIES"

[1](#)2. (C) Following the warm reception the Salva Kiir delegation received during its September 15 visit (Ref A), GOS presidential advisor Ghazi Salahuddein visited Asmara October 15 and 16 and met with President Isaias and PFDJ official Abdella Jabir. Salahuddein condemned the GSE's support for Darfur groups, according to the deputy at the Sudanese embassy, Hussein Mohammed Hussein. Salahuddein specifically warned Eritrea to stop training troops from JEM, SLA/Abdulwahid, and SLA/Khamis. He then accused the GSE of directly collaborating with Chad to support these groups, specifically accusing PFDJ political chief Yemane Ghebreab of conducting clandestine meetings in Chad to coordinate with rebel groups. Isaias countered that the GSE only wanted to assist in the Sudan peace process. Salahuddein flatly responded that the GSE's only option for involvement in Darfur is the negotiation process underway in Doha. He stressed that "Darfur should be solved by the NCP" and not an outside country. Salahuddein gave the GSE until the end of 2009 to halt its support for the Darfur groups. While the NCP would not mind the GSE providing food, housing, and capacity training, Salahuddein expressed zero tolerance towards military training.

BUT CAN WE HELP WITH THE SOUTH?

[1](#)3. (C) Salahuddein also rebuffed GSE efforts to act as a

mediator between Juba and Khartoum. Hussein said the GSE told Salahuddein it was ready to be a central player in a north/south peace process. Again, Salahuddein told the GSE there is a process already in place and the GSE's involvement would not be needed. Salahuddein continued with an analogy: "if the doctor tells the patient not to drink water, then the neighbor who provides water and kills him is at fault."

SOMALIA: TIME TO GET WITH THE PROGRAM

14. (C) The GSE still holds a grudge against the GOS for voting to sanction Eritrea (Ref B). According to Hussein, Isaias told Salahuddein, "you committed a crime when you voted against us." Salahuddein replied that he was aware the GSE actively supported anti-TFG elements in Somalia to fight a proxy war against Ethiopia. He stressed that the GOS position is to support Sheikh Sharif and labeled Eritrea a pariah, stating, "everyone supports the TFG except you!"

BETTER DAYS?

15. (C) Hussein told emboffs he expects the GSE to comply with Salahuddein's demands. The GSE has already begun talking to the rebel movements to prepare them for disengagement, he continued. During the meeting with emboffs, Hussein took a lengthy phone call, which he later claimed was a representative from the president's office waiting on the embassy to send further guidelines on engagement with the Darfur groups.

16. (C) COMMENT: The GSE has isolated itself from the rest of

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Africa. Sudan has been its closest and arguably only ally. However, Salahuddein's harsh admonishments demonstrate the alliance may only have been based on their mutual lack of engagement with the West. Indeed, Hussein described the relationship as "tactical, not strategic." Given the new USG strategy on Sudan, the GOS may be eager to disassociate itself from countries that actively work against U.S. interests, such as Eritrea and its support for anti-TFG elements in Somalia. Increased pressure on the GOS to address the Darfur crisis may also be a factor in the GOS seeking to shut down the GSE's overt support for rebel movements. Although Hussein described the visit as a "turning point" in Sudan-Eritrea relations and predicted the GSE would comply with Salahuddein's demands, Isaias is notoriously stubborn and does not usually respond to ultimatums. But since Sudan is Eritrea's only current source of fuel and much of its foodstuffs, the GSE may have little choice but to strategically retreat.

17. (SBU) This cable was coordinated with Embassy Khartoum.
McMULLEN